



**Underground Storage Tank Branch  
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## **UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK FACT SHEET FOR AGRICULTURAL TANKS**

On July 12, 1985 Governor Michael N. Castle signed the Delaware Underground Storage Tank Act. It established a program and regulations to control the installation, operation, and removal of underground storage tanks containing petroleum, chemicals, and other hazardous substances. The purpose of the program and regulations is to prevent leaks from contaminating Delaware's precious groundwater supplies, by ensuring safe methods of operation and quick response to suspected leaks. The program, housed in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), is entitled the Underground Storage Tank Branch (UST Branch).

The Regulations Governing Underground Storage Tank Systems, revised on September 26, 1990, require owners and operators of underground storage tank systems containing petroleum or other regulated substances to take immediate measures to register tank systems, detect leaks and prevent leaks at the earliest stage possible. Owners and operators of underground storage tank systems must meet a range of requirements for the design, construction, installation, repair and removal of their system.

**What is an underground storage tank system?** An underground storage tank (UST) system is any one or combination of tanks, including the piping which is used to store gasoline, diesel, kerosene, waste oil, heating oil, or a regulated substance with a capacity of ten (10) percent or more beneath the surface of the ground.

**Are any UST systems exempt from the regulations?** Yes. Specifically exempt from the regulations are agricultural and residential tanks of 1,100 gallons or less used for storing motor fuels for non-commercial purposes and tanks containing heating oils of 1,100 gallons or less used for consumptive purposes on the premises where stored. They do not have to complete notification forms or notify the Branch when installing or removing such a tank. However, the owner or operator of a specifically exempt tanks is not exempt from the release reporting requirements of the regulations.

**How do I know if my tank qualifies as a "farm tank"?** A farm tank is located on a tract of land devoted to the production of crops or raising of animals, including fish. To be exempt, the tanks must be located on the farm property. Farm includes fish hatcheries and nurseries with growing operations.

**If my tank is larger than 1,100 gallons, what steps should I take to comply with the regulations?** Regulations require UST system owners or operators to manage the system in a manner which will prevent and detect leaks. A few examples include:

- a) **Inventory Control:** Tank owners or operators must measure the tanks for the amount of product on a daily basis. These measurements are compared to the previous day's to determine if the product level has increased or decreased. A variance in the measurements may be the owner or operators first indication of a leak.
- b) **Spill and Overfill Protection:** These two simple devices will minimize releases during product delivery. Spill protection requires a catchment basin around the fill line to catch spills from the delivery hose. Overfill protection requires that a device be used to prevent the tank from being filled to more than 95 percent of its capacity. Spills and overfills account for a large portion of contaminated UST systems.
- c) **Leak Detection:** Leak detection is required to detect a release from all portions of the UST system, including the piping. Options include monitoring wells installed around the UST system, a tightness test that examines the system for leaks, and various detection tubes placed in the tank excavation during UST system installation.
- d) **Release Reporting:** Owners or operators can not allow any release from an UST system to continue. The owner or operator must promptly report any suspected release, spill, overfill, and confirmed leak to the Department and take immediate action to contain the release and minimize the environmental impact. A release can be reported to the Department day or night at 1-800-662-8802. In the event of a release, the UST Branch regulate the investigation and the clean up of soil and groundwater contamination from a leaking underground storage tank system.

As the owner of an underground storage tank, you should not be concerned with the absence or presence of state regulations. Instead you should strive to protect your property, water supply source, and investments. There are about 8,000 tanks in Delaware. Many of these are leaking. It may be a small leak of which the owner is not aware, or the owner may consider the leak to small to be repaired economically. But even a small leak can be a big problem. A hole as small as one quarter of an inch may release one gallon an hour from the UST system. One gallon of gas can contaminate one million gallons of water.

As many as 25 percent of all underground storage tanks may now be leaking. Many more will leak in the future. If the tank is past its prime (10 years old) especially if it is not protected from corrosion, the potential for a release is increased dramatically. Newer tank systems (especially piping) can leak, and spills can happen anytime.

A prudent farmer conserves one's resources, whether stock, crops, buildings, land or water, and will not allow damage to their land or water any more than one would tolerate disease in the crop or damage to one's livelihood. The Branch is here to support your efforts in protecting our environment.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding underground storage tanks, contact the UST Branch at (302) 323-4588 for more information or assistance.

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